

D 525
.T3
Copy 1

ARMSTRONG AND WORLD FREEDOM

FOUNDER'S DAY ADDRESS BY
HON. WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

ARMSTRONG AND WORLD FREEDOM

FOUNDER'S DAY ADDRESS BY
HON. WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT
PRESIDENT OF HAMPTON'S
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Reprinted from the *Southern Workman*
March, 1918

1115
Institution.

ARMSTRONG AND WORLD FREEDOM *

BY WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

President of Hampton's Board of Trustees

HALF a century ago Samuel C. Armstrong, born in and infused with the Christian missionary spirit, founded this great institution. Shakespeare makes Mark Antony say: "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones." Of course this is not true; General Armstrong's life and death and what has followed refute it utterly.

Twenty-five years ago he laid down his task to those who were to follow. Today is the day we celebrate in his name. He left us Hampton and the Hampton spirit. It is not that he founded a school whose buildings have survived him, as those which William of Wickham built. It is not that he founded a school whose organization and purpose survive him, or one like Harvard, Yale, and Cornell, with his name. Hampton does not bear his name, and yet he lives here in the work of his hands, his heart, and his brain, as no other founder of an institution of learning ever did.

Go to the University of Virginia and you will find something resembling it in the spirit of Jefferson, who lives there still, but not in the warmth of the spirit of Hampton—something which Armstrong breathed into this school of learning, something that here continues as a living fire.

It was the free spirit of free service that Armstrong taught. He taught a race the spirit of progress from slavery to self-respect, from enforced service to voluntary service in the duty of the citizen and the obligation to the community and the neighborhood. He founded it in free, intelligent skill, and hard, continuous labor. He taught the obligations of freedom. He taught the unending pleasure and satisfaction of work well done and of duty performed.

From the platform of yonder gymnasium I heard President Eliot of Harvard University say that it was Armstrong who laid the foundations in this country of the great system of vocational training; and Hampton today is the best exponent in this country

* Address delivered at Hampton Institute in celebration of Founder's Day, January 27, 1913

of the practical benefit to be derived from that kind of a system. It was suggested to him by the helpless ignorance of an enslaved and suddenly emancipated race. He enforced the necessity for the love of intelligent labor as dignifying all who engaged in it; and it is, in spite of the objections of those who contend otherwise, it is the solution of the race problem, because with that everything else in life that is worthy to attain, that is useful to attain, can be achieved.

He launched the struggle of a race to deserve freedom, to vindicate its citizenship, to justify equality of opportunity. It is given to few men to win by their own efforts, unaided by circumstances, opposed by prejudice, injustice, and contemptuous criticism, the victory which was Armstrong's. His name will go down in history with Lincoln's, as a great benefactor of the Negro race. A quarter of a century has not dimmed the lustre of his name or work. He lives forever in his continuing benefaction and in the hearts of the race he saved.

And now, today, we mourn his successor, Hollis Burke Frissell—a contrast to General Armstrong and yet essential in carrying on the work of his leader. Recognizing the primary and fundamental value of the Armstrong spirit, he kept himself, in his modesty, in the shadow of Armstrong's great name. Not a brilliant preacher, not distinguished as a teacher, he was wonderful as an executive, wonderful in winning the loyalty and enthusiasm of his Hampton men and women, in retaining and enlarging the number of Hampton's supporters, and in making its value and excellence known to the white men of the South, who must co-operate to make this great work a success. He was Christlike in his spirit and in his way of winning the great influence he wielded. Broad, catholic, sweet, and reasonable, farseeing and firm of conviction, sympathetic but stimulating, with a vision of increased usefulness for Hampton, he supplemented General Armstrong's work as no other could have done. He lived and was the Hampton spirit, which General Armstrong breathed into this place and this environment. He felt and fanned the religious fervor and faith that are indispensable to Hampton and its men and women if they are to attain the goal General Armstrong sought.

Happy an institution and a race who have had two such leaders as Armstrong and Frissell. Their successor—straightforward, effective, earnest, religious, broad, and feeling the joy of service and full of the greatness of the task he assumes—we may be confident will prove to be a worthy follower of the great men who have gone before.

And now, my friends, what would these men—these two men—have done in the presence of the crisis that faces Hampton and faces the country, faces the country and the world, and Hamp-

ton sympathetically with the country and with the world? Against our will, against our prayers, we are in this great war. In 1776 this country fought for the independence of the United States—the freedom of a nation. In 1861 to 1865 it fought and lost lives and treasure without number, for the integrity of the Union and the freedom of a race. And today, for three years, and for how many years in the future we know not, we fight for the freedom of the world.

As we look back upon the course which our country has taken in respect to this war, there is no step in which we have not followed the path of righteousness. In the outset we conformed to international law as a neutral nation. We permitted our merchants and manufacturers to furnish supplies of all kinds to the belligerents at the risk of losing them as contraband upon the high seas. Germany had avowed that to be the rule of international law and had pursued it in our war with Spain and in England's war with the Boers. Not for a hundred years has there been any doubt as to the correctness of that as the attitude of a neutral nation. More than that, it was virtuously right in this: had not nations, peace-loving and unprepared as most peace-loving nations are, the right to resort to neutral countries and neutral merchants and neutral manufacturers, to prepare themselves suddenly against a war of aggression by a nation that looks forward to war as its normal future and is always prepared, then a nation seeking war domination of the world would have an overwhelming advantage over such peace-loving nations. Therefore the President and Congress were right in keeping open to peace-loving nations the opportunity, when forced into a war by a nation loving war and lusting for power, the means of preparing themselves against such unjust aggression.

Then Germany sank, without warning, to the depths of the sea a vessel carrying 3000 innocent souls, and carried to their death 114 American citizens—men, women, and children, babes in arms. We protested, and Germany's answer was that the vessel was armed—a lie that enabled her to continue the correspondence for one full year. Then we said, when she sank the *Sussex* under similar circumstances, with American citizens on board, "We shall sever relations with you unless you discontinue." She discontinued for a time for the purpose of getting ready for a more ruthless warfare by continuing to make the submarines needed to carry it on. Then, in January last, she notified us that she intended to continue this ruthless warfare and to sink, without warning, every vessel, commercial or otherwise, neutral or otherwise, that came into a zone, 900 miles north and south and 300 miles east and west, of the high seas off Great Britain, France, and the Mediterranean.

Then we severed relations, as we said we would, and we returned to the bosom of his master that philanthropist and eminent Christian statesman—Count Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff! They sank at once four American sailing vessels and sent to their deaths twenty-five American sailors, and then we declared that war existed. No other path was open to us. Our rights had not only been invaded, the rights of our citizens had not only been violated, but in a way that left us nothing but the duty of offering the sword in vindication.

In the field of international law, the rules of war concerning the treatment of commercial vessels at sea are as definite as the law in Virginia with respect to promissory notes and real estate. A belligerent may seize the vessel and the cargo of his enemy on the high seas and may sink it. He may seize a neutral vessel and a cargo violating the rules of war, but for a century the rule has been that in doing so, if he chooses to do so, he must put the crew, the officers, and the passengers of the captured vessel in a place of complete safety.

Therefore, when Germany sank the vessels she did sink, whether of the enemy or our own as neutrals, knowing that a sinking without warning involved the death of a large part of the company of the vessel sunk, she was guilty of deliberately taking the lives of citizens of other countries without warning and without right.

Now, when a man kills another without right, he is guilty of murder. There is no other name that describes the crime of a nation which does the same thing. But it is said that those who went ought to have known the risk. Well, suppose they did. How does that change the crime of Germany? Suppose John Smith meets John Robinson on the street and shoots him through the heart and he is haled into court under indictment and then he pleads: "I am not guilty. John Robinson knew, because I wrote him a letter and told him that if he came down into the street in front of his house I would shoot him. I am not guilty; he is—of contributory negligence, that he came down in the street and met the bullet, the presence of which ought to have been anticipated." How would that plea sound in a court of justice?

So, having violated the rights of our citizens, and therefore our rights, what was our duty? What is a government? A government is a corporation of which we are all members, to which we render the duty of support, of service, military and civil, the payment of taxes, help of every kind; and we receive from that corporation, as a *quid pro quo* protection—protection as between ourselves, preservation of the rights of one as against another, and protection of the rights of each as against the invasion of a foreign country. On the high seas, on the deck

of an American vessel and under the American flag, a man is as much within the jurisdiction of the United States as if he stood on the shores of Virginia; and when a nation, a foreign nation, invades those rights by sending him to the bottom and killing him, there is no other course for the United States to take but to vindicate those rights, to demand reparation for violating them, and to see to it that in the future the rights of other citizens are not similarly violated.

No other path was open to us. Germany not only admitted that she had killed our citizens under circumstances that, of course, we must call murder, but she announced that she intended to murder other citizens—anyone who might assert his right to use the common highway of nations and go into that part of the high seas which Germany, without right and with an assertion of world domination, had fenced off against the other nations.

If this had been Venezuela, we would have sent a message demanding reparation and security against further violation; and every man, woman, and child in the United States, Senator La-Follette, pacifists, conscientious objectors, and unconscientious objectors would have approved the action. What is the difference between that case and this? None in principle, only in fact; and that fact is that Germany is the greatest military power in the world and Venezuela is not.

Therefore those who oppose war in this instance, who object to the drawing of the sword to which Germany forces us if we would defend those rights, would put us in this situation: that we are in favor of the utmost sacrifice to protect our rights and those of our citizens against a nation if she is little enough and weak enough so that we can whip her with one hand, but if she is a great military nation, resistance to whose aggression requires war and sacrifice, then we will waive those rights because they are technical only. That appeals to no one with a sense of duty as an individual or as a government.

President Wilson was criticized for the long delay in asserting those rights. That question we pretermitted; it is past. We are neither Republicans nor Democrats now. We are Americans in supporting the President in this righteous war.

So we find ourselves in a war for a cause for which, in no scintilla, need we apologize, need we defend, need we explain. We are in the war because we could not help it. We are in the war from no jingo spirit. We are in the war from a sense of duty as a country and from our sense of duty as a nation of the world. What were our traditions in the Revolution? What those in the Civil War? What was the position we won in the world? A nation upholding justice. What if now we flinch and do not meet the issue!

We find ourselves now in war, arrayed with the democracies of the world against the autocracies—against one autocracy, and that is Germany. The rest are merely “and company,” merely “me, too.” Germany is our enemy, and as we understand Germany, as we understand the psychological condition and status of Germany, we understand the war, and we do not understand it otherwise. We find that the cause which carried us into the war, righteous as it was, is only one phase of the greater cause of the great World War that we are now engaged in. It comes from the insane obsession of the German people, led by a Hohenzollern and the Prussian military regime, that they are carrying out God’s purpose in a world domination for the improvement of civilization by the spread of *kultur* by force. And you cannot know the danger to the civilization of the world, to the family of nations, of this condition of mind (diseased as it is) of the German people, unless you study their history. They are an intellectual people; they are a home-loving people; they are a music- and poetry-loving people; they are a people of great keenness, great tenacity of purpose, lacking in humor and so lacking in a sense of proportion; and when we knew them years ago, we liked them. They were genial and kindly to animals. We do not hate the Germans. It is not our business to hate them. We will not hate them after the war is over; but what we hate is their purpose, their present condition of mind, and unless we change that, the world is to suffer in the future from a constantly recurring system of war, entered upon to gratify the ambitions of the Hohenzollerns, and the insane purpose of the German people to follow what they regard as their God-given destiny to subordinate the world to their will, in the acceptance of *kultur* and their method of instructing in it.

In the early part of the nineteenth century they were twenty-eight different states—Austria at the head, Prussia next, and twenty-six other states. The other states were kingdoms and dukedoms and electorates, under the rule of kinglets, dukelets, and electors—little despots governing by the divine right of kings! Then they had a revolution in 1848 by liberty-loving Germans, who did not succeed and were driven out and came to this country and made a valuable part of our citizenship. Their blood in the Civil War was found on every battlefield, where they struggled, as they thought and believed, for liberty and the suppression of slavery. Their descendants have made valuable citizens with us.

The people they left behind went under a different environment and different education. Bismarck came into their lives and planned the unity of Germany, not by constitutional monarchy and the institution of civil liberty, but by blood and iron; and he carried it through. He organized the Prussian Army with the

tradition of drill and effectiveness derived from the time of Frederick the Great and his father. He added to that and strengthened it, and then he began his plan.

I am not telling you anything that is merely inference from what he did. I am telling you what he says himself. He carried on three wars—wars in which he so arranged it that they were all wars of aggression against Germany. He took from Denmark Schleswig-Holstein and annexed it to Prussia. He wiped Austria off the map of Germany, and took Hanover and Hesse Cassel and Frankfort, and united the Southern German states to him by an offensive and defensive alliance, and then he waited until Napoleon should declare war against him. He prepared for the war and then led Napoleon on to declare it. Then he defeated France and he took Alsace-Lorraine and an indemnity of \$1,000,000,000, which he put into the army. He crowned his king German Emperor. He went back to Berlin and sat down and digested in peace the bits of territory which he had chewed off from the rest of Europe.

This turned the heads of the German people. Such an unusual series of military successes put them in a state of exaltation that was unsafe for them and unsafe for the world. They said: "We have done this by the application of scientific principles to the art of war. We will apply this to the arts of peace." They went into manufacturing, into agriculture, into the field of business, and they achieved a wonderful success. They did it under Bismarck and they did it under William. They accumulated wealth. They increased their prosperity. They increased their population. They looked at themselves with perfect satisfaction and with a self-adoration that led to their obsession. Looking back over their success, they could not reconcile themselves to their existence except by close association with God. So they proceeded to assume that they were the chosen people of God; that God looked upon their work with satisfaction and upon them as agents to carry this work to the other nations; and as it had been won by force—military force—they created the German State into an instrument of God, and, acting for God, they easily reached the conclusion that there was no consideration that could be yielded to in the progress of that State. Thus they abolished morality for the State. They laid down the rule: "There is no international morality." Decency, humanity, respect for the obligation of treaties all disappeared when the interests and the progress of the State were concerned. And that is our enemy—as dangerous to the family of nations as a mad dog is in a domestic family, waiting only the opportunity to strike when success may follow the stroke.

You ask proof—read literature. You ask why we did not

know it before. We assumed they were extremists. We have them among ourselves—I do not name them. We do not want to be held responsible for them. But these were not extremists. They spoke the word that had sunk to the hearts of the people. The principles were taught in the primary schools, in the academies, and from the lecture platforms of the universities. Their lecturers, their great leaders in philosophy, taught them. In their sermons you saw it crop out here and there. Read the sermons—one addressed to a “German God;” another a prayer to “Him who presides in the Heaven above the seraphim and the cherubim and the Zeppelins.” The association of the seraphim and the cherubim with the Zeppelins is incongruous and irreverent to us, but to the German mind seems all right, for the reason that all are agencies of the Deity, and the Zeppelins are carrying out the God-given purpose and policy of *kultur* by dropping explosives on East London, numbering among their victims the school children and the old men and old women of that city. It is shocking, my friends, it is shocking when you think of the change that has come about through this horrible, hideous philosophy into which the Germans have led themselves.

If you wish proof in addition, read what the Kaiser says. He is always associating himself with God in a personal way. “Forward with God!” He says that “God is with us unconditionally, with avowed support.” “Unconditionally”—that is, “without regard to what we have done. The purpose, the end, the destiny is what we must look to, not the means.” He claims an intimate association with God and communications denied to other people. Now, that is a condition of a perverted mental state, but it is a condition so dangerous that we cannot allow it to continue in this world when it is backed up by the application of the highest scientific principles to the destruction of men.

I cannot take time to point out how completely responsible Germany is for this war and its character, but when you meet those who have been at the front and who have come back (as I did the other day) and hear from them the horrible nature of this war, its mechanical, physical brutality, its desire to destroy men; and when you then look back upon our Civil War—that was bloody, lives were lost, but there was a chivalry, there was a kindness between the sides, there were obligations even in war that were kept, there was a glamour about it, courage, bravery, and chivalry, reflecting the natural gentleness of the people engaged,—when you compare these two wars you realize that today in Europe, under the influence of this cruel German philosophy, it is blood and destruction of the most brutal character—anything, *anything* for military advance and military success.

That presents the problem to us. Our Allies have been fighting this monster for three years. They are nearly exhausted, and we are praying and should be praying that they may hold out until we can get there with our forces, so as to predominate in man power and win this world war for righteousness, and forever stamp out this horrible philosophy, this crass materialism, this brutal murder of the human race which Germany makes the object of her government, in order that, through the blood of other men, she may march on to control the world.

Therefore it is that you, my boys, have before you an opportunity to show the value of these equalities of opportunity. Show that you are not only citizens of the United States, but citizens of the world. Do not allow yourselves to be misled by the thought that peace is near. All these dealings of Germany with the Bolsheviks amount to nothing except a moving around on the chessboard for the advantage of Germany, so that she may acquire control of Russia and her supplies. It is enough to make one first laugh and then cry to note the dealings of Trotsky and representatives of the Bolsheviks with the armed leaders of Germany for a peace—a peace of the world—a peace of the world's workers, as Trotsky says. There is an old maxim that "he who dines with the devil must have a long spoon"—but the Bolshevik spoon has no handle at all!

Now, my boys, think of General Armstrong. He led a colored regiment in the war for your race. Would he be a pacifist in these days? Would he fail to see clearly what is before us now? We should thank God that we are in the battle now, rather than waiting until these European countries, fighting our battle, have been defeated by this monster of militarism, so that we should have to measure swords with it alone.

Do not listen to arguments of pacifism; do not allow suggestions that are mere camouflage about coming peace. We can have no peace until we whip Germany, until we produce in the minds of the Germans a conviction that the policy they have followed is all in vain; that it comes from the devil and not from God; and then they will attend to the form of government that they ought to have. They will become an amenable and human member of the society of nations again, and they will relegate the Kaiser and the rest of the "Potsdam gang" to the place where they ought to go.

There are over two hundred Hampton students and graduates already in the war. I hope there may be many others. Do not give up your education until you are called. Do not think it necessary for you to rush in until you have finished, until you are called, because you will be better men and better officers when you are called. But be ready. Do not look forward to

a speedy end of the war, but grit your teeth. Make yourselves feel that you cannot offer up your lives in a higher cause than this; not even the War of the Revolution nor the War of the Rebellion offered greater reason for sacrifice than this.

Now God bless you, boys, and go on with the Hampton spirit, for that is the spirit that will carry you to the victory we must have if the human race is to live in Christian civilization.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 021 547 981 A